

The Wee Boat

By Carleton Naylor

Over the years, sport divers have found some unusual items as they cruise along the bottoms of South Carolina's rivers and creeks. Everything from a Revolutionary War silver hat pin to a brass barrel from a flintlock pistol has been reported on quarterly artifact report forms. But Darrell Taylor of Moncks Corner (hobby license #2962) has found perhaps the most unique item to date. Diving in 28 feet of water in the East Branch of the Cooper River recently, Darrell discovered a hand-carved model of what appears to be a 17th century sailing vessel nestled in the sandy bottom (Figure 1).



Figure 1: The Wee Boat (SCIAA photo).

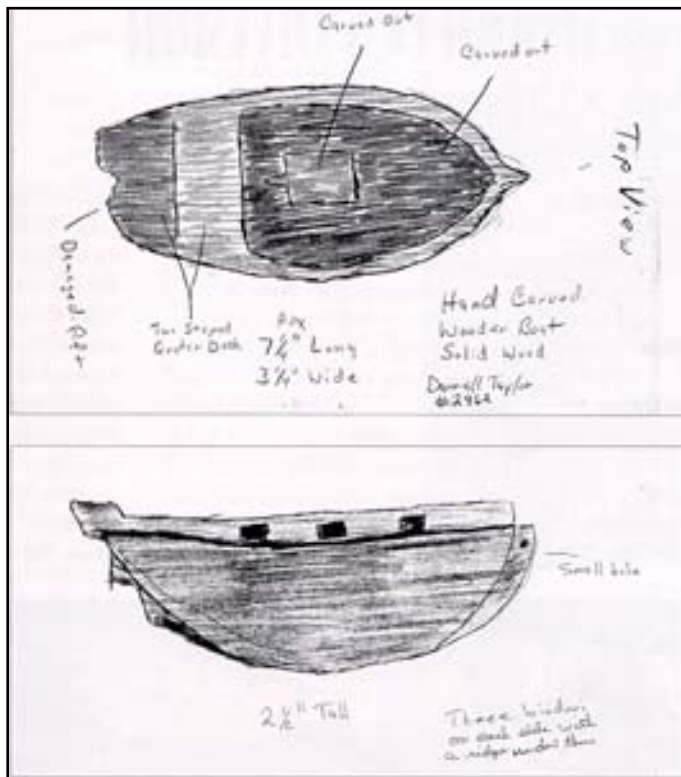


Figure 2: Drawings of vessel (drawn by Darrell Taylor).

The model is 7.25 inches long, 3.25 inches wide, and 2.5 inches tall and is carved from a solid block of wood (Figure 2). Hatches, gunwales, and gun ports are all visible on the model, along with a distinctive keel, stempost, and cutout for a rudder. Darrell first thought the ship model could be a child's toy, however SCIAA staff members think more likely the model was made either by a sailor who wiled away his time carving his ship or a shipbuilder who carved the model in anticipation of full-sized construction. Either way, the ship model is as exciting and unusual a find as we have seen in a long time.

Darrell has been a licensed hobby diver since 1991, and has extensive experience diving in the Cooper River. He is presently performing conservation on the model boat.